

GOD'S HEART THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSING

NO. 2641

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1899
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 18, 1882

“According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things.”
2 Samuel 7:21

A FRIEND observed to me, just before the service, that after the earnest endeavor this morning to magnify the grace of God, he did not want to hear any more for a week. He was perfectly satisfied with what he had heard and was only afraid lest the sermon of the evening should drive that of the morning out of his head.

Well, dear friends, that is just my own fear, too. I never like driving one nail out by hammering another in and really, what more can I say than I said this morning? I then poured out my inmost heart in endeavoring to extol the exceeding riches of God's grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. [See Sermon #1665, The Exceeding Riches of Grace] This evening's discourse, therefore, is intended to be like a little supplement to the big book of the morning sermon—just a few additional words upon the theme that we considered then.

As we read the chapter from which my text is taken, we noticed that David had a holy purpose in his grateful heart. He said to Nathan the prophet, “I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.” And he seemed to think that it was neglectful on his part to have suffered the ark to remain so long unhoused, so he resolved to build for it, and for the worship associated with it, a temple that would be “exceeding magnificent.”

He had for years gathered together gold and silver, and he meant to continue to do so, that he might erect a shrine for the Lord his God more glorious than any that had ever been built by the greatest heathen prince for his false deity. This was the thought which was in David's mind and he mused upon it, for it was very sweet to him.

It was, in fact, the great ambition of his life that he might be permitted to rear this house for the worship of JEHOVAH. Yet the Lord was not willing to accept the temple at his hands, for David had been a man of war from his youth up—and God would not have His sanctuary built with blood-stained hands.

However necessary those wars might have been for the liberation and defense of the chosen nation—and they certainly were so—yet, nevertheless, a man of peace must build the house for the God of peace. And Solomon, the son of David, in whose reign there was no war, must have the honor of raising the great house of prayer in the name of the Lord.

Yet, dear brethren, observe that though the Lord refused to David the realization of his wish, he did it in a most gracious manner. He did not put the idea away from him in anger or disdain, as though David had cherished an unworthy desire. He honored His servant even in the non-acceptance of his offer and multiplied as many blessings upon the head of the king as could have descended upon it if he had been permitted to carry out his intention.

Now, in imitation of David, let us think of some grand thing that we can do for the Lord our God. Let us, with consecrated spirit and with liberal hand, seek to honor and glorify the Lord our Redeemer. But if we should not be permitted to do that particular work upon which we have set our heart, let us not be surprised or disappointed.

A servant's true obedience can sometimes be as well seen in what he does not do, as in what he does. It is not for us to choose our place or our work, and though the zealous servant may prefer to do something which shall show his loyalty to his master in the clearest light, yet is that loyalty even more fully seen when his master says, "No, I wish you not to do that." And he, without a murmur, sits down, or goes to work somewhere else where he may have been bidden to go.

It is right for you to have in your heart a project for God's glory—it is well that it is in your heart—but if your pet project may not be carried out, it is your duty and privilege to then say to your Lord, "I am Your servant in the doing or in the not doing. I am absolutely at Your disposal in this matter and in all other things, too—and so I wish it ever to be."

Nathan was sent to David to reveal to him God's great purposes of grace towards him and his son Solomon, and the whole of his dynasty, and to give the promise that one descended from him should sit upon the throne forever—as He does and will—for the King of kings and Lord of lords, whom we greet with cries of, "Hosanna!" is the Son of David.

And still He reigns and He shall reign till all His foes shall be trodden beneath His feet. And then He shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah! As this revelation was given to David, he seems to have been oppressed with the weight of mercy which God had put upon him, so he went in and sat before the Lord to meditate upon what Nathan had said.

I think there were two questions that then rose in his mind—and to these questions he tried to find an answer. The first was—Why should God speak such "exceeding great and precious promises" concerning such weighty matters, such everlasting blessings? That was his first question. And the other was—Why should these great promises be spoken to him? Why to him rather than to anyone else? "Who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "Is this the manner of man, O LORD God?" He then proceeded to give an answer to his two questions in the words of our text, "According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things."

So, from his answer we learn, first, that *the measure of God's goodness is the heart of God* and secondly, *the reason of this goodness lies in the heart of God*.

I. First, THE MEASURE OF DIVINE GOODNESS IS THE HEART OF GOD.

God did great things for David, but not because of David's own greatness. "I took thee," said the Lord to him, "from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel." He was at first nothing but a shepherd boy, so God did not choose him because of his greatness. And when the Lord gave these great promises to David, it was not because of the greatness of David's design of building the temple, for God seemed to think but little of that and said, "In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?"

No, the one reason for the great blessings and promises which God gave to David was found in the heart of God. If a king gives presents to his courtiers, why does he make them so precious and costly. Not because of the extraordinary deserts of the person upon whom he bestows them, but because he is himself a king and therefore his gifts must correspond with his high position.

A man of liberal spirit gives generously, where a churl would scarcely spare the smallest bronze coin. But why does the generous one give so freely? Why, simply because he is generous. Men do not always measure their gifts by the worth of those to whom they give them, but if they are themselves large-hearted, they reckon according to the largeness of their own hearts and give accordingly.

That is what David said—he could not imagine why God should do such great things for him till this thought entered his mind, "He is a great God. Greatly gracious and full of lovingkindness and therefore it is that He has promised all these things to me."

If you look carefully, you will see that this general principle runs through all the gifts of God to us. But dear hearers, God gave us one such costly gift that He could never give us another equal to it. I mean, *the great gift of the Lord Jesus Christ*. God had but one only begotten and well-beloved Son, yet He gave Him to us.

Now, if all heaven and earth were put together, and all that God has anywhere in the universe were added thereto, it could not equal in value that first majestic and unspeakable gift. How came the great JEHOVAH ever to think of making such a wondrous present as this to poor worms such as men are? No one could have suggested the thought to Him. I can well believe that when the holy angels heard that the Son of God was to be incarnate, and when it oozed out that in human flesh He was to die, even they could scarcely believe that such a thing was possible. The thought of Calvary's sacrifice could never by any possibility have originated in their mind.

O God, You did give Your Son to us, and for us, because Your heart was Your heart and there is nothing like it even in Your heaven of glory! His infinite heart, in inconceivable compassion, suggested to itself the giving up of its greatest treasure and it gave up for us, poor sinful men, the very heart of Christ to bleed and die on our behalf. It must be because of the love of the heart of God that this unique gift was given—there could be no other reason for its bestowal.

Then, dear friends, following the course of the chapter as well as we can, the next promise was concerning the *great adoption*. God said to David, concerning Solomon, "I will be his Father, and he shall be my son"—and the great honor which was promised to Solomon has been also conferred upon every believer in Jesus, for "as many as received him, to them gave he power (the right, or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Have not many of us received within our hearts "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"? Now, what could have induced God to adopt us as His sons and daughters? What could have made Him say to us, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you," except this reason which David gives in the words of our text, "According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things"?

The fatherly heart of God longed to take within itself vast multitudes of the human race, so He said, "My Son shall be the firstborn among many brethren. He is my only begotten Son, but there shall be given to Him a numerous seed who shall be joint-heirs with Him, for they shall be adopted into My family." And it is even so.

God did not adopt us because of any merit in us which entitled us to be His children—but because He has such a great heart, so full of love—when He made a feast for His Son, He could not endure that there should be any empty seats at that royal banquet, so He said to His servants, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Thus you and I, beloved, were brought in and made to sit there with Christ Jesus, as we do sit even now, for He is not ashamed to call us brethren. This greatness of the heart of God must have been the cause and the only cause of our adoption, as well as of our redemption.

The Lord also promised to David that when He had adopted Solomon as His son, He would be constant to him, and never forsake him—"If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul."

Brethren, that *great constancy of love* finds a parallel in your case and mine. God does not adopt us as His children today, and then cast us off tomorrow. I speak with all reverence when I say that it is not possible for Him who, "according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," to unchild us and permit us to lose that hope.

My sons, whatever they may be, must always be my sons. And they who are born of God shall forever be the children of God. I venture to repeat the lines that have often been spoken against, but which are true every whit—

*"Once in Him, in Him for ever.
Nothing from His love can sever."*

He gives us eternal life and we shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of His hands.

And why is this? Because of some good thing in us that will make us constant and keep us holding fast to Him? No, here is the answer, let me read the text again—"According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things." God's heart is constant in its affection. He does not cast away His children. He will not divorce the soul that has been espoused unto Him. Christ has made us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—we can never be cut off from Him—no, not even a little finger of Christ shall ever be taken away, else would He be a mutilated Savior and that He can never be.

His own declaration is, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He will securely and forever keep all the sheep that were given to Him by His Father, and not one of them shall be lost.

This has always seemed to me to be one of the supreme blessings of the covenant of grace. I confess that I would hardly give a penny for any salvation that I could lose. I would not go across the street to pick up a sort of quarterly or yearly salvation. Everlasting life is the thing we need—the life of God which can never change or be taken from us—and that is what is given to all of you who believe in Christ Jesus.

But why is it given? The only answer is—According to the heart—the faithful, immutable, gracious, loving heart—of the ever-blessed Father. Even under the old dispensation, God said, "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "The LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." He cannot endure it and therefore He will not put away those who are espoused to Him.

Let me mention another great favor which we get from God, and that is, *the promise of blessing for the future*. The Lord spoke concerning Solomon and David's house, "for a great while to come," and He has spoken after the same fashion concerning us who believe in Jesus. Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And then answered his own question, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Unless Christ shall come first, we shall all die—but death will not divide us from the living Savior. It will only knock off the fetters from this decaying body and give us liberty to soar away to the bosom of our Lord. You and I, if we are believers in Him, shall be there with Him. If we are among the called, and chosen, and faithful, we shall, by and by, stand at His right hand and we shall reign with Him, in His glory, forever and ever, in yonder land of blessedness—in the kingdom of the Father.

"Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come," said David. But in our case, it is far more than a great time to come, for it is a great eternity to come. God has appointed bliss for us forever and forever—"pleasures forevermore." "A crown of glory that fadeth not away." "A city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "A kingdom which cannot be moved."

That last passage suggests one thing more which I find in this chapter. That is, *the promise of the kingdom*. The Lord said, concerning David's son, "I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." And here is the parallel in our case, for we are made kings and priests unto our God and we shall reign for ever and ever.

To us also belong our Lord's words to His disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." You shall even judge angels and sit as co-assessors with the great Judge in that last tremendous day. And concerning the mighty fallen angel himself, to you shall be fulfilled the promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Oh, the glory of which He has spoken concerning us and the kingdom that is yet to be revealed!

Now, why does the Lord lavish such marvelous mercy upon such insignificant and undeserving creatures as we are? Why does He seem to use His utmost powers in inventing new blessings for us, such as must astonish the angels that stand before His face? Oh! why does He thus lift the beggars from the dunghill and set them among princes, even the princes of His people. Our text contains the only

answer—"According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things." What an immeasurable measure of goodness and grace there is in the heart of God!

Before I leave this part of my subject, I want you to turn it to practical account. Try, dear friends, to use this thought whenever you are exercising faith. The devil will say to you about many a promise which God has given, "Oh, that is too good to be true!" Tell him that it is not so—it might seem too good if God gave only according to the measure of our merit, or the limit of our understanding, or the extent of our faith. But He does much better than that—"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

God's heart, not mine, is the measure of His giving. Not my capacity to receive, but His capacity to give. Get that thought thoroughly fixed in your mind. I can only receive like a man, but God can give like a God. He does everything divinely and He certainly makes no exception to His rule when He is dealing with His people. If it is God who is to give, then I can believe in the greatness of the gift be it what it may, for nothing can be too great for Him.

You know the old and somewhat hackneyed story about Alexander promising to a man in his army that he would give him whatever he chose to ask. He was to send his request to the imperial treasurer, but when it was written out, it was for so huge a sum that the treasurer refused to pay it. It was too much, he said, for a common soldier to receive. But when Alexander heard of it, he said, "I like that man's faith—he has honored me by such a large demand, for he asks something that it is worthy of Alexander to give."

Now, if that man had been foolish enough to measure his request by his own poor soldiership, he would have asked for a few pounds in ready cash, or a pension of a few pence a day might have contented him. But instead of doing so, he reckoned according to the vastness of Alexander's empire and asked great things, and so he did Alexander honor. Whenever you are exercising faith, beloved, remember that it is according to the heart of God to give with exceeding generosity.

So, when you are praying, if unbelief would stop you, and say, "Do not ask for this or that, for it is too much for you to have," I advise you to say to yourself, "I will not be stinted in my desire and I will not commit the sin of limiting the Holy One of Israel. But as He gives according to His own heart, I will ask great things of Him, for He has said, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.'"

You know, I suppose, what some people say is the meaning of that passage. I am not quite sure that it is so, but it is said that, sometimes, the kings of Persia have been known to bid a prince open his mouth and they have put in diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and all manner of precious things, as many as it would hold.

If that kind of thing should happen to any of you, I expect that you would open your mouths very widely—I have no doubt that your capacity to receive would be greater on that occasion than you have ever yet known it to be. But when you are coming before the God of the whole earth, oh, for a big mouth to ask great things of Him! Oh, for a wide mouth, then, to take in every conceivable blessing from Him! In our prayers, let us not ask according to the measure of our poor little heart that is so shriveled, cold, and weak, but according to God's great heart that is infinite, and full of grace and love.

Just once more, use this thought of the greatness of God's heart in the exercise of your delight in the Lord. Sometimes we are afraid of being too happy, but that is scarcely possible. Oh, how happy Christians have a right to be, with heaven for their home, God for their Father, Christ for their Savior, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter, and the Sacred Trinity pledged to defend and bless them!

Oh, sit down and delight yourselves in the Lord! Let me not hear anything about cares and troubles for a while—I want to get into my secret place of communion with my God, shut the door, and just turn over and over in my mind such a passage as this, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." Or this, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

David wrote, "Delight thyself also in the LORD," not merely be thankful, or peaceful, or happy, but "delight yourself in the LORD." Do not go paddling about in the shallows—take a header and dive into

the depths of divine joy. Plunge yourself into the Godhead's deepest sea and be lost in His immensity. You shall never so fully and so truly find yourself as when you have lost yourself in God.

"Oh, that is saying too much!" says someone. No, it is not—it may be too much for you if you are measuring with your poor little bushel—but now take God's great measure as it is revealed to us in our text—"According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them."

The next time I find a little mercy, I will say, "Thank God for that," but I shall not be quite sure whether it is not one of the common, ordinary mercies that He gives alike to His friends and His foes. But when I get hold of a great mercy that is so enormous that I cannot comprehend it, I shall say of it, "That came from God. I am sure it did. Great mercies come from the great God, the great Giver of all good things." The greatness of the mercy is the proof that it is divine—and my soul will appropriate it, and rejoice in it, for God has given it to me according to His own heart.

I have only a few minutes left for the second part of my subject, which happens to be a truth which I have so often preached to you, that I may the less regret that I have but a short time to speak upon it now.

II. Secondly, THE REASON OF GOD'S GOODNESS TO US LIES IN HIS OWN HEART.

Why does God bless His people? What is the cause of it? Here it is in the text—"According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things." Why did God have mercy at all on any sinner? Because mercy was in His heart and "He delighteth in mercy." When God was willing to pardon sin, why did He not save the fallen angels? Why did He pass by them and look in pity on men? For no reason that I know of, but that it was according to His own heart.

And when He did turn to men to save them, why did He take pity on you and why did He look with love on me? I cannot tell you, except for the reason which our Lord Jesus Himself gave, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." When God elected His people, why did He elect them? Here is the reply—"According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things."

Sovereignty ruled the hour. God chose whom He had a right to choose, for this is one of the attributes which He strictly guards—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Some people bite their tongues whenever they hear me quote that text.

Well, they will have to bite them very often, for it is one of the most grand truths revealed in the Scriptures and I shall delight to repeat it as long as I live, and to any objector I have simply to say what Paul wrote, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" It is God's will that chooses His people unto eternal life. We know no other reason.

Will you, who are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, tell me why you were thus favored? Why were you given to Christ and put into His church? Ay, why, but that it was according to the heart of God? And when you were called effectually by His grace and made willing in the day of His power, while so many others refused to come, and willfully perished, what was the reason for the distinction in your case? Some good thing in you?

Far from it. Our text explains the mystery—"According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things." And when you were pardoned, brother, why were you forgiven? For the sake of your repentance, or in hope of your doing better in the future? By no means, for if you did better, it would be the result of the pardon, not the cause of it. The only satisfactory explanation is that it was according to God's own heart.

Is not that a grand passage, in the forty-third of Isaiah, (oh, how often I have admired God's grace as revealed in it), where God speaks of His people having wearied Him with their iniquities? He says that He never wearied them, nor caused them to serve with an offering, yet they had not bought Him any sweet cane with money, nor filled Him with the fat of their sacrifices.

But they made Him to serve with their sins, and wearied Him with their iniquities. Yet, even then, He goes on to say, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions”—for what reason? “for mine own sake”—not “for your sakes,” but “for mine own sake”—“and will not remember thy sins.”

The reason for God's mercy lies not in man, but in God's own heart. He looked and He could see no good of any kind in man, nor the slightest hope of there ever being any good. But within His own bosom He found the motive for the display of His grace—and then His own arm brought salvation. Oh, how blessed it is to see this great truth—that the cause of the salvation of any man lies in God's own heart, not in the man's own goodness or worthiness, or in any works foreseen in him—or in anything at all that comes of the creature!

Now, I want you who are coming to God for mercy to see how you can make use of this truth. I know what you have been doing. You have been looking inside your heart to find a reason why God should forgive you, and as you cannot find any reason there, you think that there is none. Now just turn your eye the other way and look up to the great heart of God, and say, with David, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”

Try to spy out the reason for mercy in God—there is not any reason for it in yourself. You deserve His fiercest wrath and hottest hell. And if that be your portion, you will never be able to complain of any injustice having been done to you, for you will have no more punishment than your sins have brought upon you. But look away to God's heart and you will see that He loves to forgive—that it is His glory to forgive. So plead with Him to pardon you for His own name's sake, for that is the best of all arguments.

I want you not only to do that, when you first come to Him, but to do the same as you continue to cling to Him. I can assure you that I am clinging to Christ, at this moment, in exactly the same way as I did when I first found Him. I got rid of everything that I could confide in. In fact, I would have had to laugh at myself if I had set up any righteousness of my own, for I had not a stick or stone out of which I could have made a righteousness fit to present to God.

Then I came to Christ, not because I had any right of my own to cling, but because He seemed a dear, kind Savior who loved me to cling to Him, and that is just why I am clinging to Him now. I say to Him, “Lord, I will not go away from You, for as I look up to You, I perceive that You are all goodness, and all mercy, and all love. And therefore I intend to cling to You as long as ever I live. Sink or swim, I will always hold to You.”

In like manner, dear friend, your reason for continuing to cling to Christ must be found alone in the heart of Christ and not in yourself. Cling on, then, because it is according to His heart never to cast away a single soul that puts its trust in Him.

And this is the reason, dear brethren, why we must cast all our care upon Him. I invite you, and I urge you to do so. If you ask yourself, “Why should I cast my care on Him?” The reply is, because it is His heart's wish that you should do so. Christ loves you to leave your cares with Him. The more you trust Him, the better He loves you, if that can be. At least, the more you shall realize His love.

You know the pretty story of the poor girl in India, whose teacher was very sick and weak, so the girl begged her teacher to lean upon her. But the English lady did not like to lean too heavily, so the girl pleaded, “O dear teacher, if you love me, lean hard! I shall be happy to feel your weight upon me.” And it is just so with the Lord Jesus. He loves you to lean hard upon Him, to cast yourself wholly upon Him, and give up trying to help yourself.

You will never be so blessed and never realize so much of the preciousness of Christ as when you do that. Perhaps you ask, “May I?” May you? He wants you to do so, that is the very reason why you may. According to His own heart, He bids you come and cast yourself entirely upon Him.

Now, dear hearers, what do you say to this subject? Does it not glorify God? Have I preached up man? Nay, I have preached him down and I have tried to preach God up to the very highest—and so I will while this tongue can move. Let my right hand forget her cunning ere I shall begin to preach about the dignity of human nature and the grandeur of the miserable wretch called man.

Nay, God is glorious over all and if man be plucked from the burning, it must be the hand of God that delivers him—and the reason why he is rescued is because the heart of God has moved His hand to save the poor sinner from going down to destruction. I am quite content with the poet's reason,—

*“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
‘Twas even so, Father,’ you ever must sing,
‘Because it seemed good in Thy sight.’”*

But O beloved, what a wide door this truth sets open for poor lost men! You self-righteous people will not come in by it, for you do not like this God-made entrance. You want to try to save yourselves—but you will only the more effectually ruin yourselves—that is all that will come of it. But every poor sinner who is worried by the devil and brought to the lowest extremity, will say, “If there is a reason in the heart of God why I should be saved, I will e'en come and trust myself on Christ's finished work, and trusting in Him, I will see whether I shall not be saved.”

O you lost and ruined, O you helpless and hopeless, O you far-off ones, O you who lie at death's door and hell's door—look ye to Jesus on the cross! Your hope lies there. Turn your eyes away from yourself, for there is nothing but that which you will have to weep over, and groan over, in yourself. Man's extremity is God's opportunity—if you have come to the end of self, I invite you to begin with Christ. Yea, if you have done with self, Christ has already begun with you. And when He begins, He never ceases till He perfects His work.

The Lord bless and save you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 SAMUEL 7:1-22

Verses 1-2. *And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.*

He said no more, but his intention was very plain, namely, to build a house that should be a more suitable abode for the ark of the Lord.

3. *And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.*

He spoke too fast. Even prophets, who are inspired of God, must wait upon their Master for their message. And when they utter words which only come out of their own mouths, they say what they will have to unsay before long. It did look very clear that this was the proper thing for Nathan to say to David, but he had not a, “Thus saith the LORD,” for it.

4-5. *And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD,*

“You have already let him know what *Nathan* had to say about the matter. Now go and tell him what JEHOVAH says.”

5. *Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?*

The conception was altogether too low. He has made all space—time is His creation and the arch of heaven stands by His almighty power—shall He Himself have a house in which He can dwell?

6. *Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.*

A structure to be set up, and taken down, and to be moved about wherever the people journeyed. That was sufficient to be a central shrine of worship, and God cared for nothing else.

7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

Did God ever put to the children of Israel such a question as this? No, and it is very remarkable that, from the time that the temple was built, you may date the decay of true religion in Israel. And the same thing has happened many times since—whenever religion is surrounded by elaborate ceremonies and gorgeous architecture, it is almost certain to suffer loss of power and efficacy. The simplicity of worship may not be the life of it, but it has a very intimate connection with that life.

8-11. Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

God has a way of returning men's generosity in kind. Since David wished to build God a house, God would build David a house.

12-15. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

Here is our warrant for believing in the final salvation of Solomon. Perhaps that Book of Ecclesiastes, the work of his old age, shows us by what rough and thorny ways God brought the wanderer back. He had tried to satisfy himself with the things of time and sense, but he was constrained at last to utter this verdict, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." And he had to go back to his God, and find his comfort there.

16-18. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD,

Like one weighted down with a great load of mercy, too heavy for him to stand up under it, and therefore he must sit down, and consider, and meditate upon the wonderful words of God to him.

18-19. And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?

"All that You have done for me, therefore, in overcoming my enemies, and making me king over this people, has seemed to be but a small thing to You, for 'Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come.'"

That astonished David and therefore he asked, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?" "Man gives stintedly after his own grudging fashion, but You give in a lordly, kingly, divine way." David's question may be rendered, "Is this the law of the Man? Am I to be the parent of that Man who shall be my Lord as well as my son, who shall reign forever and ever, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end?"

David was spelling out the inner mystery hidden in the words of the Lord, reading between the lines, and discovering that the covenant which God had made with him was, at least in some respects, a repetition of that greater covenant made with Christ on his behalf.

20. And what can David say more unto thee?

He had not said much, but he could not say much under such circumstances. He was utterly overwhelmed, just as when some wondrous kindness has been shown to us, we wish rather to sit still, in grateful silence, than to stand up and speak acknowledgments, for our heart is too full for utterance.

20-22. *For thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*

God had said to David, in the message He sent by Nathan, "I have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great that are in the earth." And now David brings back the words to God, and says, "Thou art great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—8, 36 (SONG I), 136 (SONG II)

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.